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Editor
Robert B. Taylor
2330-1 Patterson Drive
Eugene, Oregon

Editorial Committee
William A. Smalley
Eugene A. Nida
Marie Fetzer Reyburn
James O. Buswell, III
Claude E. Stipe

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EDITORIAL REMARKS

Reflections on the Auca Tragedy

It is with some hesitation that I venture to comment on the recent tragedy involving the killing of the five missionaries who attempted to initiate work among the Auca Indians of eastern Ecuador. I hesitate because I am not in possession of all of the facts of the case; yet I feel that something should be said from an anthropologically oriented position. It is an event which merits careful reflection by those who are concerned with pioneer missionary effort.

There is nothing to be gained, of course, by any condemnation of the methods of approach employed. Reports indicate that the five missionaries, all of whom were of superior ability and orientation, employed the utmost care in planning and executing their endeavor. I agree completely with the frequently heard statements that their martyrdom was of the most honorable kind. I do not think, however, that we should therefore consider that the tragedy could not have been avoided if things had been done differently. Many of us in the home land find it difficult to remember that missionaries are every bit as human as the rest of us; that they also make mistakes; that their failures and successes, like ours, can be credited in part to their various abilities and shortcomings. This does not deny the work of God's Spirit; it is merely that I believe it is also important to view the matter from the human angle, for God works through human instrumentality. The approach here is based on the belief that careful evaluation of the incident need not involve either disrespect for the missionaries or a denial of the power of God.

We are, I think, justified in considering whether or not different orientation and/or different methods would be more successful in any future efforts among these or similarly hostile peoples. More specifically, from the point of view of this journal, we should ask whether or not a greater degree of anthropological orientation or knowledge would have helped. Meanwhile we recognize

that there is no magical insurance against failure in anthropology--in fact, a number of anthropologists have lost their lives attempting to work with hostile groups. It is a relative matter. However, anthropologists, if their science is worth anything at all, would expect that given equality of preparation in all other respects, those with adequate anthropological orientation would be more apt to succeed in such an enterprise than those without it.

The important anthropological qualification is a knowledge of the cultural thought and behavior of the peoples one is approaching based on an appreciation of the general principles of human culture. Only a few rare individuals acquire this cultural orientation independent of anthropological study.

The missionaries to the Auca were definitely handicapped in regard to the first part of the qualification, that is the knowledge of Auca culture, for little reliable information on them is available. The term Auca is used in a couple of ways. For one, it is a name applied to the non-Quechua speaking tropical forest Indians of the eastern part of Ecuador. In this usage it may be compared to terms such as Dyak to indicate the primitive interior peoples of Borneo or Igorot to designate the hill tribes of Luzon. Such terms are of little anthropological value, for they designate groups which may practice rather diverse cultures.

More specifically applied, the Auca are apparently a subtribe of the Zaparo speaking Indians which are found in the general area of the Napo and Cururay Rivers. Most anthropological works on this area do not even mention the Auca Indians and there is only scanty material on the Zaparo culture, written up by the Explorer, W. B. Grubb in 1927 and by Simpson in 1878.

As to the anthropological orientation of the missionaries I have little information. At least one of the three with whom I was personally acquainted had had

some anthropology courses, but I had been too long out of contact with them to know to what extent any of them were culturally oriented, from anthropological or other bases.

Again, we cannot know whether or not such orientation would have helped in this case, or at least I cannot know in view of my lack of information. What I should like to do, however, is to outline briefly how I think anthropology might contribute to preparation for a project such as was attempted.

First would come the acquirement of cultural orientation through anthropological study. What this should involve for the missionary is a topic requiring further study. Such orientation is best acquired by missionary trainees in a Christian school which offers properly taught courses in anthropology.

Secondly, the missionary should acquire every bit of knowledge about the people that he can before contacting them. The language is of first importance. In the case of a hostile group especially it would be of utmost advantage to have a speaking knowledge of the language before contacting the group. This can be accomplished if a satisfactory informant can be found, and the time it takes to acquire that knowledge would be well worth the effort. Only in rare cases will a complete and satisfactory study of the language be available in printed form for small or remote groups. Contacting a difficult group with little or no ability to communicate with them is a handicap which must not be minimized. If this handicap cannot be largely removed before contact a knowledge of linguistics and language learning techniques, or even acquaintance with a closely similar language will help in gaining as rapidly as possible the ability to communicate with the people.

It is also important, with or without the knowledge of the language, to master all available information about the rest of culture (language is viewed as one

aspect of culture). In this way one may gain the knowledge of the interests and orientations of the people which can be such a great aid to successful dealings. He may be able to avoid doing certain things, which being interpreted by the people through the screen of their own culture, may have unfortunate results. We may never know whether or not the missionaries unwittingly did something which could have been interpreted by the Auca as an act of hostility. A missionary may also be able to find clues which will enable him to take positive action to lessen the hostility of the people toward him.

To secure such information one must first know just what group he is contacting, and, obviously, the missionary team did know this. Knowing this, all ethnological sources about the group should be secured, digested, and combed for clues pertinent to initial problems of contact as well as post-contact dealings. If such material is not available or is scarce one should study thoroughly the culture of a people known to be closely similar.

At the present time there are Christian anthropologists who should be able and willing to consult with missionaries and assist them in securing anthropological materials on the people in question. Articles difficult to secure may be photographed--books may be secured on inter-library loan.

Beyond this, of course, the knowledge must be applied. Even the most carefully prepared anthropologist or missionary might fail in attempting to establish contact with a hostile or backward group because of lack of ability to apply his knowledge, either through the possession of the wrong kind of personality or some accidental occurrence. Barring such things, anthropological preparation as indicated above should provide a somewhat greater opportunity for success than if it is not employed, and it is such preparation that I should like to see made for any further attempt to reach the Auca Indians or any other similar difficult group.

MISSIONARY LANGUAGE-LEARNING

William A. Smalley

Readers of Practical Anthropology are probably aware of some of the contributions being made by anthropologically-oriented linguistics to the solution of missionary language problems. The Summer Institute of Linguistics (Camp Wycliffe) is the rather well-known pioneer in applying techniques for figuring out new languages to the unknown or poorly known smaller languages in which missionaries work. Other institutions which train missionaries are following with programs in general linguistics and linguistic analysis, so that no missionary going to an unanalyzed language (one which has to be worked out without the help of grammars, literature, or written literary tradition) needs to go without at least partial preparation.

The percentage of missionaries who go to a language situation such as was just described, however, is small. Most missionaries study languages like Japanese, Korean, Spanish, French, Urdu, Hindi, Chinese, or Vietnamese. These languages have long literary traditions, highly educated "language teachers," grammar books, and a developed writing system. It is unrealistic and inefficient for all missionaries learning such languages to start from scratch as though they were unwritten languages and continue from there. At the same time, however, it is true that the available "grammars" are bad, the "language teachers" are inefficient, and the writing system is misleading because it does not closely represent speech. Missionaries studying such languages need the results of descriptive linguistics just as badly as do the missionaries to aboriginal tribes.

The real difference between the two types of missionary language-learning situations, then, is that the worker in aboriginal languages needs the techniques of linguistics (as he gets them in courses in descriptive linguistics at Wycliffe and elsewhere) and the missionary in the non-aboriginal languages usually needs the end results of others' analyses. These end results

are everything from proper ideas about languages, proper attitudes, to pedagogical grammars - soundly constructed, and following the most advanced language-learning methods.

Linguists talk about the dichotomy which we have been discussing in terms of language analysis and language learning (or language assimilation). People teaching missionary linguistics are usually very much concerned with the problem, but the truth is that our handling of language analysis has run way ahead of our handling of language learning. Language-learning techniques are being pulled in as adjuncts to our analysis teaching (and it is well that they should), but it is time that mission boards, missionary-training institutions, teachers of missionary linguistics, and missionary candidates alike faced up to the issue of language learning. How much more silly can we get than to teach missionary bookkeeping, missionary aviation, even missionary cultural anthropology and linguistic analysis, if we do not really face up to missionary language-learning?

As I see it, the problem of missionary language-learning exists on three levels. On the first level we have a respectable, though by no means fully adequate, start. On the second level we have simply a bare beginning - but enough to provide an indication of what can be done. On the third level - the level which I feel would provide the most efficient activity - we have done nothing.

The first level, the level of the respectable start, is a program for training outgoing missionaries in the skills of language learning, including phonetics, and introduction to language structure, the nature of communication, proper attitudes toward language, etc. These are, of course, distinct from the skills of language analysis, though by no means unrelated. At the Summer Institute of Linguistics they are taught as supplementary to language analysis, while at the Toronto

Institute of Linguistics no analysis is taught at all. But these Institutes and other regularly functioning schools for the training of missionaries, such as the Kennedy School of Missions, are participating in a modest way in this "first level" program.

I am personally most familiar with the Toronto Institute of Linguistics (a one-month intensive course) because of having participated in its program last summer and will use a brief description of it to illustrate what training along this level tries to do. Institutions differ in their approach and emphasis, but those with an up-to-date approach have similar goals and general orientation. Of course the amount of time given to the work varies tremendously.

The backbone of the Toronto Institute of Linguistics course this summer, as always, was phonetic drill. The ways of forming speech sounds were demonstrated and practiced intensively. Hearing sounds and producing them, being able to mimic speakers of foreign languages, were constant goals.

Closely associated with phonetics was the practice learning of two different languages in sequence. The purpose of this part of the work was to give more phonetic drill in actual language-learning situations (and for that reason languages of vastly different phonetics were chosen), to demonstrate and apply good language-learning procedures, and to illustrate efficiently-constructed language courses (pedagogical grammars). The languages used were Vietnamese (of Indochina), following a course entitled Vietnamese for Missionaries (of which I am a co-author), and Aymara (of South America), following materials from a course developed by Miss Ellen Ross (also in last summer's T.I.L. staff) for missionaries in the Andean region. Both of the courses consist almost entirely of language drill, and students had practice by the mimicking of materials recorded on tape machines. Only fourteen hours were spect on the one language and eight on the other - just enough to

illustrate the points being made and to give extensive practice in the using of the sounds of these languages.

What constitutes the nature of language structure was the item to which was given proportionately the next largest slice of time. Students were introduced to "phonemics," "morphology," and "syntax" with no idea of teaching them to analyze these features of languages but simply to help them know that languages work in certain ways, that come features of structure are universal in languages, that other features differ from language to language in a fantastic variety of possibilities. Reading assignments contributed also to this aspect of the study.

Language as communication between people, and the anthropological setting of language, the relation of the message to the language and culture - these were also touched upon briefly in lectures, some of which were given by Dr. E. A. Nida of the American Bible Society. This was a part of the program of helping students to see the wider setting of language and of helping them develop constructive attitudes toward their use of language in the field. Its goal is to help toward a relevant, worth-while communication of the Message of Good News.

A few lectures were devoted solely to "how to go about studying a language" and related field problems. For the most part, however, such advice was integrated into the total course in order to give as obviously practical a treatment as possible. The constant theme, five hours a day, five days a week (plus readings, outside practice, and other assignments) was the fluent, efficient mastery of a new language.

The second level on which we can approach the problem of better missionary language-learning is that of well-constructed pedagogical grammars. Anyone not trained in linguistics cannot realize how inefficient, if not totally incorrect, are most regular grammar books

used to teach languages. A small start has been made by academic linguists toward the preparation of new grammars based on sound analyses and on practical content for some fifty or more languages. In cases where these have been published for a given language which the missionary wants to learn he may take advantage of them. In most cases nothing has been published.

There are some difficulties with the missionary use of these courses, however. In the first place, the practical content of the published courses is usually directed toward the needs of American military officers, because many of the books were written for that group during the last war. Missionaries need much of the same subject material, but they need much more. The whole area of religious vocabulary is omitted, for one obvious example. Nor do they get into country life. The vocabulary is limited in a way that is inconvenient for missionaries.

As a second difficulty, if the missionary has not had training of a TIL type he really doesn't know how to profit fully from the course. The course is worked out on the basis of new linguistic and pedagogical developments which are foreign to the untrained person. That does not mean that they use technical terminology. They do not. In fact they are usually very plainly and lucidly written, and if the missionary would really follow directions he would be all right. However, the mythology about language which we learn in our schools makes it almost impossible for us to follow directions which contradict our prejudices, unless we have been trained in the new way. Some missionaries have used these courses with success. Others have not.

A third difficulty is in the attitudes of mission boards and the traditions of language learning in the field. Some boards and fields simply will not let their missionaries use these courses, even where available, because they do not prescribe to the habits of the past.

Then again, the courses are not complete enough to carry the missionary through his whole language program (though they can give him a far more efficient start than is otherwise possible). The transition to something else is often difficult and confusing for the unguided person.

In a very few cases, missionary linguists have prepared pedagogical grammars with the needs of missionaries kept strictly in mind and the problems mentioned above somewhat eliminated. Of course, nothing of this kind can change attitudes of missionaries, fields, or boards; but often when something of this kind is done specifically for missionaries the prejudice has already been partially eliminated before the project began. In addition to the two pedagogical grammars mentioned previously in connection with the TIL practice-learning situation, a few others have been done or started. Usually, though, these are done for languages marginal to the big problem - not languages to which missionaries go by the hundreds, but ones to which they go by the tens or scores.

This winter I expect to be in the Sudan for three months, helping missionaries work out pedagogical grammars in four difficult languages. These are languages spoken by a few hundred thousand people at best and among whom a relative handful of missionaries are working. In the meantime, hundreds of missionaries have gone to Japan since the war, and few people in responsible positions have apparently really faced the missionary language-learning problem as it exists there on a linguistically adequate basis.

It seems to me that the second-level approach, tremendous step over the first-level that it is in each case concerned, can never be carried out efficiently without the first. In order to use the courses developed in the manner of which we have been speaking, most missionaries need orientation such as is given at TIL. If there were linguistically-sophisticated people in each

area where the course was to be used, so that everyone who learned from the specially-prepared course was under the part-time supervision of that linguist, there would be less of a problem. He could provide the necessary background and direction for them in the training course. Such people are very rare, however. In most cases, level two presupposes level one, though it goes far beyond it.

The third-level approach combines the virtues of the first two levels and eliminates many of their difficulties. At present, however, although the U. S. armed services, the State Department, and some Roman Catholic missionary groups are regularly using the approach, Protestant missions are not. It is an ambitious project and would require a considerable financial outlay. But if the work were undertaken jointly by a representatively large group of boards, I doubt that it would be in the long run as expensive as present language study. It certainly would not be as frustratingly inefficient.

The third-level approach involves the setting up of an institution manned by technically trained individuals who would guide the outgoing missionary in the full-time learning of the language he would use on the field over a period of a full academic year. The courses of study would be soundly constructed pedagogical grammars. The "tutors" would be native speakers and/or tape recordings. Such a program could start with up to twenty or so of the world's major languages at present. A part of its function would be the development of courses in the rest. The orientation, the viewpoint fostered by linguistics, would be built into the whole course. At the same time, the missionary would learn his language--not fully, for he would want to continue his study for a year on the field. But he would learn in a year far more than is done at present on the field, and far better. This third level, it seems to me, is the only long-range "answer" to the problem.[1]

American Bible Society

NOTES

1. For a fuller discussion of this "third level" see the author's "A Programme for Missionary Language Learning," published in The International Review of Missions (January 1953), and reprinted in The Bible Translator (July 1953).

ONE ANTHROPOLOGIST'S VIEW OF THE IMPORTANCE OF A MISSIONARY'S PERSONALITY

"The Native's idea of Christianity does not really come from the Bible or from the official creed of the Church: it comes, above all, from the missionary who preaches to him and who works in his area; and he judges the life of a Christian by the impressions he forms of the missionary's conduct and attitude."

-- I. Schapera in Methods of Study of Culture Contact in Africa, 1938.

REVIEW

"Applied Anthropology in 1860", H. G. Barnett. Applied Anthropology, I (April-June, 1942), p. 19.

The following paragraphs constitute a summary of the contents of the above article. They are extracted without change from The Implications of Applied Anthropology by Robert B. Taylor, an unpublished master's thesis, in the hope that they may provide some food for thought. Those who are interested in the full article should be able to obtain it any university library as well as in other large libraries.

Recognition on the part of an anthropologist that application of ethnographical knowledge in missionary work operates according to the same basic principle as does applied anthropology is found in an article analyzing the work of William Duncan, which appeared in 1942 in Applied Anthropology. Duncan arrived in Northern British Columbia in 1857 to work among the Tsimshian Indians. His activities provide a rather remarkable example of what may be called an experiment in applied anthropology made at a time when the systematic and comparative science of human behavior was just beginning. Like all missionaries in those times, it was necessary for Duncan to acquire his knowledge of aboriginal society by first hand observation. In all his work he manifested a keen insight into the nature of human inter-relations. Moreover, he showed himself to be well aware that he could manipulate the individuals who composed Tsimshian society. He was firm and set up many strict rules of conduct for his converts, but they were introduced in such a way as to seem to be an internal development rather than an arbitrary imposition.

Duncan was shrewd from the first. He realized that he must understand the language and culture of the Indians before he could deal effectively with them. Accordingly, he enlisted the services of a young native who instructed him in their language and culture. He

spent eight months in preparation before giving his first sermon, which was delivered in the Tsimshian language.

Duncan early realized that if lasting success of his work was to be insured, Christianity should offer something more than spiritual benefits. He took pains to demonstrate that the acceptance of the Christian religion meant material as well as spiritual benefits, not only for the white man, but for the Indian as well. He dealt with the Indians as fairly as he knew how and made use of presents to disarm suspicion. He introduced such Western necessities as soap and trousers, using these material benefits as a wedge to gain a hearing for his spiritual message.

Another thing of which Duncan was aware was that the most effective way to alter a culture is by working through the young. He feared treachery from the older Indians, and the small group of loyal followers which surrounded him consisted of young people. In fact, he did experience a degree of violent opposition from some of the older Indians, who regarded his doctrine as a threat to their old way of life. In regard to many things he would not compromise, but he was usually wise enough not to try to change customs overnight.

One difficulty which often attends the efforts of those engaged in Duncan's kind of work is that the easiest to convert are those discontented individuals who are looking for any sort of escape from their old way of life. This was true of Duncan's early experience. Nevertheless, it was his policy to see that his closest associates were not of this kind. Rather, he made it a point to cultivate friendship with outstanding individuals. He made chiefs' sons or nephews his right hand men, and through them he gained prestige.

Duncan found it quite difficult to maintain a group in truly Christian conduct within the environment of opposing and retrogressive forces. His solution was to

establish a separate Christian community. He took fifty persons with him and removed some seventeen miles. Those who went with him went voluntarily. A fifteen point pledge was set up: any Indian could join or leave voluntarily at any time according to whether or not he conformed to the conditions of the pledge.

Singular understanding of the character and culture of the Indians was shown in Duncan's recognition of what might be called danger spots in Christianity. Because some of the cult practices of the Tsimshian included the spectacular eating of human flesh, he refused to introduce immediately the sacrament of the Lord's Supper in his church services. He was aware of the fact that it would not be easy for the Indians to make the distinction between the symbolic bread and human flesh, but that they would rapidly effect a connection between the Lord's Supper and their former custom of eating parts of the human body. For similar reasons he avoided baptism and religious paintings and carvings. The danger was too great that the Indians would attribute intrinsic value to these acts and symbols. Likewise, Duncan refrained from emphasizing the doctrine of the Holy Spirit and the acceptance of direct revelation, for the main feature of Tsimshian cult belief and ritual was the spectacular demonstration of spirit possession by mythical beings which caused the possessed person to act in a wild and often inhuman manner. Duncan's fears that any overemphasis of these aspects would cause the Indians to connect it with their former cult practice and react accordingly was strikingly justified when, in 1877, his mission board prevailed upon him to leave the field to become ordained. As a result of the indiscretion of Duncan's successor the connection was made, and some of the Indians became ecstatic, declaring that they had seen angels flying and hovering about the village and had witnessed miracles. For four or five days they danced and sang continually, inducing more visions in themselves and others. This occurrence caused Duncan to return hurriedly, and he determined not to again leave his field or submit to the demands of his mission board.

Whether implicitly or explicitly, it was one of Duncan's assumptions that his new community was to conform to the best standards of Western culture. He believed that the material needs of the people must be provided for and that idleness was a source of evil. Accordingly, he taught secular as well as religious subjects. He considered knowledge for its own sake as worthless, or even detrimental. His aim was a practical, livable Christianity for the Indian, and he recommended academic learning only to the extent that it enabled the individual to cope with the practical matters of living.

It has been noted that Duncan tried to stave off any disruption of his Christian group by removing it from non-Christian influences. In this he was unsuccessful. In 1881 the Church Missionary Society sent a bishop to take over the village, and his unenlightened innovations precipitated chaos. Duncan departed to establish another community on Annetti Island in southern Alaska. He was further opposed, however, and in 1914 a series of actions was begun by the Bureau of Education, Alaskan Superintendency, which broke the control which he exercized over the village. Duncan died, a defeated man, on August 30, 1918. He had reckoned successfully on the whole with the culture of the Indians, but he failed to foresee that his success might be turned into failure by members of the culture into which he was born.

Robert B. Taylor

2330-1 Patterson Dr.
Eugene, Oregon

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Practical Anthropology

To the Editor:

I have been struck recently with the genuine practicality of Practical Anthropology particularly since its initial volumes coincide with the tremendously significant work being done by Dr. and Mrs. Reyburn in South America. It provides an ideal vehicle for the publication of their findings to a most receptive body of readers who in turn, are perhaps better able to communicate and interpret their reports to the wider Christian public than any other single group.

Their recent applications to missions of anthropological principles in dealing with language, custom, and individual alike truly mark a new era in Christian anthropological consciousness. This, combined with your own very keen vision in carrying to realization something whose need was long felt, plus the breadth of understanding and scope of experience being contributed by Dr. Nida, the only true veteran in this field, all serve to coincide in what I feel is a thrilling development in Christian Anthropology.

With apologies to Malinowski for two capital letters, I would like to quote a sentence from his Dynamics of Culture Change:

> Here once more Practical Anthropology leads us to the reframing of problems, to the posing of new questions, and to an analysis which is at the same time wider, more comprehensive, more genuinely functional and capable of practical application.

James O. Buswell, III
Anthropology Department
Wheaton College
Wheaton, Illinois

NOTES AND NEWS

Howell's Views on Man's Origin Reported Incorrectly

Views erroneously attributed to Dr. Clark Howell, physical anthropologist at the University of Chicago, have been given wide circulation among evangelical Christians by means of news item published in a recent issue of Christian Life. Christian Life editors obtained the information from an article in a Chicago newspaper. The newspaper article attributed to Howell a statement to the effect that new discoveries suggest that the idea of the divine creation of man may be as close to the truth as Darwin's theory.

However, in a letter to Mr. Buswell of the Department of Anthropology at Wheaton Dr. Howell pointed out that the writer of the Chicago newspaper article badly distorted some remarks he made concerning the implications of an article by another physical anthropologist, Loren Eisely, in Harper's Magazine. Howell went on to say in the letter to Buswell that he would "deny absolutely" any creationist views.

Nickerson Pursues Graduate Degree

Gifford Nickerson is engaged in graduate study for a degree in anthropology at Northwestern University, Evanston, Illinois, where he began his work in the Fall of 1954. Nickerson graduated in anthropology from Wheaton College in 1954.